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-PHILIPPINES: REBEL SOLDIERS TAKE MACTAN AIR BASE IN CEBU

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[TEXT] CEBU, PHILIPPINES, DEC 1 (AFP) -- MUTINOUS SOLDIERS HAVE SEIZED CONTROL OF A KEY AIR BASE IN THIS CENTRAL CITY FRIDAY, CAPTURING FIGHTER AIRCRAFT, MILITARY OFFICIALS SAID HERE.

REBEL TROOPS FROM THE SOUTHERN PROVINCE OF SURIGAO TRAVELLED TO CEBU BY BOAT AND SEIZED THE MACTAN AIR BASE, DIRECTLY ADJOINING THE MACTAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, WHERE INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS TO MANILA WERE BEING DIVERTED.

REBEL TROOPS IN MANILA PREVIOUSLY SEIZED CONTROL OF A PORTION OF THE AIR FORCE HEADQUARTERS AND CLOSED THE MANILA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT.

REGIONAL MILITARY CHIEF BRIGADIER GENERAL RENATO PALMA AND REGIONAL POLICE CHIEF BRIGADIER GENERAL RAUL IMPERIAL SAID THEY COULD NO LONGER CONTACT THE HEAD OF THE AIR WING DIVISION AT THE BASE.

THEY SAID THEY HAD BLOCKED OFF THE STREETS LEADING TO THE BASE. NO AIRCRAFT HAD BEEN SEEN TAKING OFF, THEY ADDED.

THEY DID NOT SAY HOW MANY AIRCRAFT WERE AT THE BASE BUT IT WAS KNOWN THAT F-5 FIGHTER-BOMBERS ARE BASED THERE, AND THAT AIRCRAFT FROM OTHER BASES HAD BEEN BROUGHT TO MACTAN FOR REPAIRS.

IN MANILA, THE REBELS HAVE USED AIRCRAFT SEIZED FROM CAPTURED BASES TO BOMB AND STRAFE THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE AND MILITARY HEADQUARTERS.

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